

American

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Japan, U.S. Agree to Broaden Security Agreement

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
03 October 2013

Washington — Secretary of State John Kerry says the United States and Japan have agreed to broaden a 16-year-old security and cooperation agreement with the goal of strengthening security across the Asia-Pacific region.

“As a Pacific power, the United States understands the fundamental importance that our Pacific partnership gives to our security and to our prosperity,” Kerry said at a joint press briefing October 3 at the Iikura Guest House in Tokyo.

“So we are coming together now to modernize our deep cooperation through both of our military and our diplomatic partnerships, and that is so we can better prevent and respond to the ever-changing threats of the 21st century.”

Kerry and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel met with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera on October 3 as part of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, known informally as the 2+2 talks. American secretaries of state and defense have been meeting with their Japanese counterparts in these conferences since 1990; this is the first meeting to be held in Japan.

“Our bilateral defense cooperation, including America’s commitment to the security of Japan, is a critical component of our overall relationship and to the Obama administration’s rebalance to the Asia-Pacific,” Hagel told journalists.

The Japanese and U.S. officials agreed to enhance the ballistic missile defense capabilities of both countries and to locate a second advanced X-band radar site at the Air Self-Defense Force base at Kyogamisaki. They signed an agreement for creation of the Cyber Defense Policy Working Group that is charged with increasing cyberdefense cooperation between the Japanese Self-Defense Forces and U.S. forces. They also approved deployment of F-35 jet fighters and, for the first time, unmanned surveillance drones in Japan. The United States will provide Navy P-8 aircraft, an advanced manned reconnaissance airplane.

Kerry said that a joint communiqué issued October 3 represents a substantive road map that effectively updates a 16-year-old defense agreement. The update is designed to reflect the transformation that has taken place in Northeast Asia, the Asia-Pacific and the world. Kerry also noted that the United States and Japan have been the

closest of allies for more than 60 years.

Hagel called the results of the security talks a significant step forward, adding that both countries will identify new technologies and capabilities that will be needed for changing security challenges.

“Following today’s decision, our two governments will work closely together to update the roles and responsibilities for each of our countries during peacetime and for all contingencies,” Hagel said. The goal is a balanced and effective alliance, one where the two militaries are full partners, he added.

Foreign Minister Kishida told journalists the security environment in the region is becoming “increasingly severe.”

“Toward the coming decade, we had a very in-depth discussion and, based on that, what the Japan-U.S. alliance should do for the peace and stability of the region and as well as defense for Japan,” Kishida said through an interpreter.

Kishida said the United States and Japan will begin an official review process of the joint defense cooperation across 15 areas. “We’ll expand the security and defense cooperation and we’ll accelerate cooperation for the realignment of U.S. force[s] in Japan. We have agreed on these points.”

U.S. Will Negotiate with Iran, but Will Enforce Sanctions

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 03 October 2013

Washington — Until a verifiable resolution of Iran’s suspected nuclear weapons program is in place, tough sanctions will remain in place, says Wendy Sherman, U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs.

At an October 3 hearing on Iran’s nuclear program, Sherman told members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: “Let me assure you that we will continue to vigorously enforce the sanctions that are in place as we explore a negotiated resolution, and will be especially focused on sanctions evasion and efforts by the Iranians to relieve the pressure.”

The United States remains committed to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, Sherman said. In recent talks with the Iranian government at the U.N General Assembly in New York, she said, the United States pursued a dual-track policy of engagement and pressure.

“While our preference has always been diplomatic engagement, we concluded that such engagement would not work absent meaningful pressure,” Sherman said.

Acknowledging the “deep mistrust” between the United States and Iran, Sherman said, “Any productive path forward must start with mutual confidence building through meaningful, transparent and verifiable steps.”

“We will be looking for specific steps by Iran that address core issues, including but not limited to the pace and scope of its enrichment program, the transparency of its overall nuclear program and stockpiles of enriched uranium. The Iranians, in return, will doubtless be seeking some relief from the comprehensive international sanctions that are now in place.”

According to Sherman, the current sanctions regime applied to Iran is one of the toughest the world has ever seen. “As a result,” she said, “23 economies have united in significantly reducing or eliminating purchases of Iranian crude oil.”

Over the past 24 months Iran’s currency, the rial, has depreciated by about 60 percent as Iran’s access to the international financial sector has been largely severed, she said. The devastating effect of the sanctions on the Iranian economy, Sherman said, was recognized by Hassan Rouhani in the run-up to his election as Iran’s president in June.

Sherman cautioned that although Rouhani may have won his country’s presidential election as a “moderate” willing to take a different approach to the West, he is still a hard-liner by U.S. standards.

“Rouhani is very much part of the religious cleric class in Iran,” Sherman said. “He is very tough. He is very conservative.”

U.S. engagement efforts with Iran will include addressing concerns such as Iran’s sponsorship of terrorist organizations, human rights abuses and destabilizing activities across the region, Sherman said.

“We will remain in close consultations with our allies and partners in the region,” she added, “including Israel, whose security remains a paramount focus.”

“We seek an agreement,” she said, “that respects the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy while ensuring to the world that Iran meets its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and U.N. Security Council resolutions.”

U.S. Constitution Determines How Government Works, or Doesn’t

By Bridget Hunter | Staff Writer | 02 October 2013

Washington — On October 1, the beginning of the U.S. fiscal year, lack of congressional funding shut down much

of the federal government as Americans argued about who was to blame for the impasse.

The conversations tend to focus on names like Obama, Reid and Boehner, but probably should include Washington, Jefferson and Franklin. The document the latter three helped forge laid the foundation for U.S. democracy and deliberately created the condition that allows shutting down the federal government.

In 1789, the framers of the Constitution assigned Congress control over spending as a way to limit the power of the presidency. The U.S. government can spend money only “in consequence of appropriations made by law.”

During the 19th century, the executive branch worked around this restriction by buying on credit and sending the bills to Congress for payment. Congress responded to this erosion of its authority in 1884 by passing the Antideficiency Act, which made it a crime to willfully spend money that had not been appropriated by Congress, except in situations of imminent harm to life or property.

Despite the new law, Congress continued for nearly a century to routinely miss deadlines for government appropriations, frequently filling the gaps with short-term funding measures called continuing resolutions.

These lapses delayed travel, purchases and new contracts. They occasionally disrupted federal payrolls. However, neither the legislative nor the executive branch seriously contemplated ceasing government activities, and federal agencies continued to operate with faith that Congress would eventually provide funding.

THE RULING THAT CHANGED WASHINGTON

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter directed his attorney general, Benjamin Civiletti, to review the Antideficiency Act. Civiletti’s finding permanently altered the way Washington worked.

“The legal authority for continued operations either exists or it does not,” he wrote in a formal opinion, adding that when that authority does not exist, the government must send employees home. His opinion also stated any agency heads who failed to comply could be criminally prosecuted.

Five days after the opinion, funding for the Federal Trade Commission expired amid a congressional disagreement over the agency’s powers. The commission, the first federal office closed by a budget dispute, halted operations and sent 1,600 workers home. It reopened the next day, after quick action by Congress, but the lapse cost taxpayers \$700,000.

Carter ordered the government to prepare to shut down when the new budget year began October 1, 1980. Funding for many agencies did expire for a few hours, but no workers were sent home.

Near the end of his term, Civiletti further clarified the law's meaning to exempt from a government shutdown military activities, air traffic control, prison management and other work that protects human safety or property.

President Ronald Reagan, elected in part for promises to cut taxes and shrink government, adroitly used the threat of a shutdown to advance his political agenda.

He exercised his first veto November 23, 1981, blocking an emergency spending bill and sending federal workers streaming out of their offices. Hours later, Congress passed a three-week spending measure that met the president's requirements and workers returned, at a cost to taxpayers of \$80 million.

Disputes between Reagan and Congress sent workers home for half days twice more. Reagan's successor, President George H.W. Bush, only once used the tactic, which resulted in a partial shutdown during an October holiday weekend. Those adversely affected were mostly tourists prevented from entering national parks and the Smithsonian museums.

In the years leading up to Civiletti's opinion, budget standoffs lasting a week or more had been commonplace. After the opinion, no standoff lasted more than three days until 1995.

CLINTON VERSUS GINGRICH

The full-scale shutdown that many had considered unthinkable finally occurred during the administration of President Bill Clinton.

Clinton and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich disagreed on some of the most pressing issues of the time, including the future of the Medicare health program for the elderly, assistance to the poor, tax cuts and the federal budget deficit. Their clashes resulted in two shutdowns, one in 1995 for six days and another in 1996 for 21 days. The shutdowns cost taxpayers millions and harmed the U.S. economy by affecting incomes of federal workers, government contractors and businesses across the nation that served the government.

Public opinion tended to support the president, and Congress ended up accepting most of Clinton's conditions in the spending bills it passed. The American electorate, decidedly pro-Republican in the 1994 midterm elections, re-elected Clinton, a Democrat, in 1996.

SHUTDOWN 2013

On October 1, 2013, lack of funding for fiscal year 2014 mandated that parts of the U.S. federal government begin closing.

Republicans in the House of Representatives are seeking to cut funding for the Affordable Care Act, which President Obama considers one of his administration's most important achievements. The Senate, in which Democrats hold a majority, has rejected House bills that contain the funding cut.

During the shutdown, essential services like Social Security payments continue, as do activities needed to maintain national security. Services that are funded by user fees also continue, as do some programs that have operating funds left over from fiscal year 2013 appropriations.

The executive branch determines which employees can be sent home and which must remain on the job without pay, at least for now. In previous shutdowns, federal workers have been paid retroactively.

On October 2, tourists hoping to visit parks and monuments were disappointed. Federal workers, whom President Obama described as "the punching bags" in this impasse, are anxious, either waiting to be recalled to work or anticipating the moment when they will be sent home. Taxpayers are likely to lose millions, regardless of how the situation is resolved.

Ultimately, the federal government will reopen when the president and the two chambers of Congress find a way forward that is acceptable, or at least tolerable, to all. And that is exactly what the Founding Fathers intended.

South Korea, U.S. Announce "Tailored Deterrence" Strategy

By Karen Parrish | American Forces Press Service |
02 October 2013

This article was originally published to the Defense Department website on October 2

Seoul, South Korea — The United States and South Korea agreed to establish "a bilateral strategy for tailored deterrence against ... North Korean nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction," Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said at a press conference here October 2.

Hagel and his counterpart, South Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin, spoke to reporters after the 45th Security Consultative Meeting in the South Korean Ministry of Defense building earlier in the day. The annual meeting brings together military and foreign

affairs officials from the two nations to discuss alliance, peninsular, regional and global issues.

The tailored deterrence agreement will create a strategic, policy-level framework within the alliance for deterring specific threats, Hagel said, “and help us work together more seamlessly to maximize the effects of our deterrence.”

Kim noted both sides have agreed on the need for a “more future-oriented and comprehensive strategic alliance.”

In a joint communiqué issued after the meeting, Hagel and Kim condemned North Korea’s December 2012 long-range missile launch and its February 2013 nuclear test, and “urged North Korea to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and to cease ... its nuclear programs immediately, including its nuclear activities at Yongbyon, uranium enrichment and construction of a light water reactor.”

In his remarks, Hagel also emphasized North Korea’s stockpiles of chemical weapons. “There should be no doubt that any North Korean use of chemical weapons would be completely unacceptable,” he said.

The communiqué reaffirmed U.S. commitment to provide and strengthen deterrence for South Korea “using the full range of military capabilities, including the U.S. nuclear umbrella, conventional strike, and missile defense capabilities.”

It also provides for a “comprehensive counter-missile strategy” to, Kim said, “detect, defend, deter and destroy” threats from the North Korean arsenal.

The agreement states South Korea will “continue to build reliable interoperable response capabilities and to develop the Korean Air and Missile Defense system” and that both sides will further interoperability of the alliance’s command and control system.

U.S. Army General Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also attended the discussions. Other senior U.S. military leaders in the region were present as well, including Navy Admiral Samuel J. Locklear III, who leads U.S. Pacific Command, and the outgoing and incoming commanders of U.S. Forces Korea, United Nations Command and Republic of Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command, Army General James D. Thurman and Army General Curtis “Mike” Scaparrotti. Their South Korean counterparts also attended.

Scaparrotti assumed the three-flagged South Korea-based command later in the day from Thurman, who is retiring.

Locklear and Thurman shared their views on regional issues October 1 with reporters traveling with Hagel before the change-of-command ceremony. Locklear noted that units from within his command train and conduct exercises regularly with South Korean forces, which he termed “highly capable and very professional.”

Thurman, who has commanded the roughly 28,500 U.S. service members in South Korea for two and a half years, noted that during his tenure readiness across the joint and combined force has been his highest priority.

During his command, he said, South Korean military forces have continued to “demonstrate their expertise in the air, on the ground and in the maritime domains.”

Thurman said he remains confident the allies can defend the peninsula, which has been in a state of suspended war since North and South Korea signed an armistice in July 60 years ago. The United States fought side-by-side with South Korean forces during that war, he noted, and the two countries signed a mutual defense treaty in 1953, 60 years ago October 1.

Thurman said the alliance is based on shared values, combined hard work, and a collective commitment to stability involving the U.N. sending states, South Korea and the United States.

“Since the Korean War, the Republic of Korea has been one of the greatest success stories of our time,” he said. “They went from a country that was torn apart by war ... [to] a very vibrant democracy, a global economic power, a vital security partner and a world leader.”

That success, Thurman added, “is an important example of what a great alliance can accomplish together, and it is worth defending together.”

U.S. Works with Other Nations to End Child Labor

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 01 October 2013

Washington — The U.S. Labor Department marked two decades of working with nations around the world to combat child labor with the release of a new report, an updated list of goods produced by child labor, and the awarding of \$26 million in grants to help four nations combat child labor.

The Labor Department’s International Labor Affairs Bureau released on September 30 the 12th annual edition of its Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. For 143 countries, the report details where child labor exists and governments’ efforts to combat it. It assesses advancements and provides specific recommendations for progress. According to the report, 10 countries in 2013 — more than ever before — received an assessment of

significant advancement.

Writing for her blog, the bureau's Acting Deputy Undersecretary Carol Pier said: "It is my hope that the report ... serves not just as a call to action but as a roadmap for action, not just as a tool for identifying shortcomings but as a guide for developing strategies to address them."

Some 168 million children around the world are exploited for their labor, according to recent statistics released by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations agency tasked with promoting recognized human and labor rights. Of that number, 85 million children work in dangerous conditions.

Freedom from child labor — particularly the worst forms — is widely recognized as a fundamental human right, which many governments worldwide have committed to protect.

The U.S. Labor Department's report, mandated by Congress, tracks the worst forms of child labor as defined in the U.S. Trade and Development Act and ILO Convention 182. These are included:

- All forms of slavery, including the sale or trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and compulsory labor, including forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- The use of a child for prostitution or for pornographic purposes.
- The use of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs.
- Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Since 1993, the International Labor Affairs Bureau has worked to raise awareness globally about child labor and funded projects that help vulnerable children and their families. The bureau has funded more than 270 projects in more than 90 countries to combat the worst forms of child labor.

On September 30, Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez announced grants totaling \$26 million to nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations for projects to reduce child labor in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Rwanda.

The Labor Department also released an update of its List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor, as required by the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005. The updated list includes a total of 134 goods from 73 countries that the International Labor Affairs Bureau has reason to believe are produced

by forced or child labor in violation of international standards.

Greater Focus on TB Screening Can Save Young Lives

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 01 October 2013

Washington — The lives of 74,000 children might be saved each year if specialized attention is focused on the youngest sufferers of tuberculosis (TB). A coalition of U.S. and international groups put forth a plan to do so October 1, calling it the first to specifically target TB in children under 15.

"Any child who dies from TB is one child too many," said Dr. Mario Raviglione, director of the Global Tuberculosis Programme at the World Health Organization (WHO). "TB is preventable and treatable, and this road map focuses on immediate actions governments and partners can take to stop children dying."

The coalition of health agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has figured out why children are dying needlessly. They are too seldom screened when their vulnerability to TB exposure is high. Their TB symptoms are mistaken for other common childhood diseases. If they are properly diagnosed and receive treatment, research is lacking about the best dosage and duration of TB medications for children.

The Roadmap for Childhood Tuberculosis: Towards Zero Deaths points a way to overcoming these difficulties.

"By scaling up existing tools and investing in improved approaches for the future, we can turn the tide on this hidden epidemic," said Dr. Tom Kenyon, of CDC's Center for Global Health. "But we must put these tools in the hands of front-line health care workers and use every opportunity to identify children at risk for TB."

The road map emphasizes the need to raise awareness and skills among front-line community health workers about TB risks and dangers in children. Research shows that children are not frequently screened for the disease, even when they live with an infected adult or in a high-risk community.

The needs of children and adolescents must be included at all levels of the health care system, the findings recommend, including scientific research, health policy planning and clinical practice.

This new push to address TB in children comes in the tailwind of A Promise Renewed, a campaign begun in 2012. With commitments from 175 nations, this campaign has cast a new light on the need to combat preventable

diseases in young children and improve their chances of survival into adolescence and adulthood.

Like so many issues in global health, poverty is a key reason many children receive poor medical treatment. "Most of these children live in the poorest, most vulnerable households," said Nicholas Alipui, UNICEF's director of programs. "It is wrong that any children should die for want of a simple, affordable cure, especially where there are community-based options to deliver lifesaving interventions."

Integration of TB screening, diagnosis and treatment into community maternal-child health care is one key step toward reducing child deaths, the coalition says. The international health groups are also hoping to put increased resources into enhanced efforts to target this disease. A WHO estimate finds that \$120 million in additional funding will be necessary to properly address the needs of TB-infected children and those co-infected with HIV and TB.

U.S., U.N. Partners Seek Solutions to Syrian Refugee Crisis

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 30 September 2013

Washington — Regional stability and economies are at risk as the Syrian humanitarian crisis becomes "the world's largest mass displacement in over three decades," according to U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, speaking in Geneva September 30.

Burns has joined the executive committee of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in an annual meeting where the Middle East dominated the opening discussion.

Seven million Syrians have run from the violence in their neighborhoods; 2 million of them are refugees in neighboring countries, Burns said, while unknown thousands more seek safety wherever it can be found.

The United States has contributed more than \$1.3 billion to this crisis since 2012, the leading donor in the international community. Burns called on representatives of 86 other nations serving on the UNHCR executive committee to increase humanitarian assistance inside Syria, while also pushing for diplomatic action.

"It is high time for the [U.N.] Security Council to speak with one voice to demand unfettered humanitarian access," Burns said. Combatants in the Syrian conflict are reportedly blocking attempts to move assistance across lines of control. Direct attacks on humanitarian and rescue workers have been documented, while many hospitals and clinics in Syria have closed amid the violence.

The United Nations has sought \$3 billion from the international community to help refugees and an additional \$1.4 billion for displaced persons inside Syria, according to an article by the U.N. Refugee Agency.

U.N. High Commissioner António Guterres commended the neighboring nations that have taken in the refugees, but said "the immense number of Syrian refugees fleeing the war is threatening those countries' social and economic fabric."

Burns agreed that Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt need additional support to cope with the "protracted crisis" of displaced Syrians. "United Nations relief efforts must be expanded and linked to economic development and stabilization undertaken by international financial institutions and development agencies," Burns said.

Guterres told the executive committee that the hosting nations need emergency development assistance for health, education, housing, water and energy. These sectors are being strained by the influx of additional people — 726,000 in Lebanon, 525,000 in Jordan and 490,000 in Turkey, according to UNHCR's count.

A refugee agency article says job markets, salaries and prices have all been affected by the violence and its ripple effect through the region, leaving refugees and other families unable to sustain themselves. One forecast sees increasing unemployment in Lebanon, with potentially tens of thousands more people pushed into poverty as the months without resolution wear on.

Burns also called on the UNHCR executive committee to extend more comprehensive protection to the most vulnerable: women, children and refugees living outside of camps. The instability in the region also creates conditions where human trafficking, gender-based violence or forced marriage might occur, Burns said. The United States is backing nongovernmental organizations working to impede such outcomes, with further investments in information campaigns and safe shelter.

At the U.N. General Assembly last week, Secretary of State John Kerry announced another initiative to address the threats to women and girls in humanitarian emergencies. "Safe from the Start" will coordinate efforts of relief agencies to take action as a crisis begins, to discourage gender-based violence and victimization.

Children in the midst of displacement and turmoil also are at risk of long-term trauma and developmental problems. Burns urged a greater emphasis on creating safe spaces for children to play, learn and begin to heal from the disruption of their lives.

Even in the face of tremendous unmet need, Burns praised the helpful spirit already demonstrated in the region. "The way in which the governments and peoples across the region have so generously opened their homes, schools and communities to millions of Syrian refugees has inspired us all," he said.

India-U.S. Ties Grow Stronger, President Obama Says

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 27 September 2013

Washington — The world's two largest democracies — India and the United States — are forging stronger ties based on common interests, says President Obama.

During a joint press briefing at the White House after his talks with India Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Obama said there is "a natural convergence" between the United States and India based on their investment in peace and prosperity.

Citing the "incredible people-to-people ties" that exist between the two nations, Obama said "our government-to-government cooperation matches the great affection and affinity that exists between the Indian and American peoples."

"We have enormous commercial ties between our two countries, and in fact, bilateral trade between our two countries has gone up by 50 percent just over the last several years," Obama said. As a significant world power, India has worked closely with the United States on a whole range of issues from climate change, to alleviating world hunger, poverty and disease, he said.

Both nations, the president said, "have a shared interest in making sure that Afghanistan continues on its path to a peaceful democratic country." And both nations, Obama said, "share an interest in making sure that we help Afghans stand up for the rights of all groups inside of Afghanistan — that the rights of women and minority groups are protected and that the upcoming election happens in a way that maintains and continues to strengthen stability in that troubled country."

India is the largest regional contributor to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and will be an important partner in the transition of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan in 2014, according to a U.S. Senate resolution passed September 25 that welcomed Singh to the United States for meetings to advance the U.S.-India partnership.

In his remarks at the White House, Singh said the U.S.-India partnership is based on principles and pragmatism. "I'm very happy to say that in the last five years that I have worked together with President Obama, that process has got strengthened in every possible way," the prime minister said.

Singh is scheduled to leave Washington for New York, where he will address the 68th session of the U.N. General Assembly on September 28 and meet his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, on September 29. President Obama thanked Singh "for what has been a consistent interest in improving cooperation between India and Pakistan."

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